
American River Basin

Attachment 15: IRWM Plan – Reduce Delta Water Dependence

Reducing Dependence on the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta from Existing IRWM Plan

The current American River Basin (ARB) Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) program greatly enhances local supply reliability by expanding water supplies through conjunctive use and reducing demand through water efficiency measures, which in turn provides significant benefit to the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta (Delta). Two key ways that the existing IRWM program addresses this are through the IRWM Objectives and how projects are prioritized in the IRWM Plan. Each of these is explained further below.

Only a portion of the ARB region's water supply is diverted from the primary zone of the Delta, primarily via the recently-completed Freeport Regional Water Project. However, reducing dependence on water diverted from the Delta or from upstream in the watershed has comparable benefits.

IRWM Objectives

The May 2006 adopted ARB IRWM Plan results in substantially reduced dependence on the Delta. Specific objectives in the IRWM that help achieve this include:

- **Water Supply** – plan for and implement programs and projects that develop the highest level of reliability in public drinking water suppliers and equitably distribute capital and operating costs.
- **Recycled Water** – move forward in the long-term planning of recycled water use to improve water use efficiency in the region and reduce TMDLs for certain constituents in receiving waters of treated wastewater effluent.
- **Other** – implement regional water management strategies that provide the highest level of understanding and financial support for regional programs and projects to meet the ARB IRWM Plan objectives. A specific sub-goal under the “other” category was to evaluate and identify improvements to the Regional Water Efficiency Program managed by the Regional Water Authority (RWA).

As has been explained in the ARB IRWM Plan and in this Proposal, a key driver for the ARB IRWM program has been implementation of the historic Water Forum Agreement (WFA). The WFA includes co-equal objectives to: provide a reliable water supply for planned development to the year 2030; and, to protect and preserve the lower American River. These objectives are directly analogous to the State's co-equal goals adopted in the 2009 package of water legislation. To achieve this, the Water Supply Objective for the region has been to greatly expand conjunctive use operations in the region. This helps balance out the basic sources of supply in the region to ensure that surface water use is maximized in wetter periods and groundwater use is maximized in drier periods, which helps ensure that water is available for the environment when it is needed most. This water made available to the environment is

subsequently available to provide direct benefit to the Delta by increased flow into the Delta. The water supply improvements support implementation of flow and temperature conditions in the lower American River that are more beneficial to Salmon and Steelhead fisheries, which also spend a part of their life cycle in the Delta. The wells and booster pumps in the Proposal significantly increase local supply reliability in drier periods, which will reduce the region's reliance on surface water thus providing direct benefit to the Delta.

The Recycled Water Objective for the region encourages the use of recycled water in areas that currently rely on potable water. This allows for the reduction of water that would ordinarily have been diverted primarily from local river sources, which will subsequently provide direct benefit to the Delta. The recycled water project in this Proposal will directly offset an existing potable water demand for a customer that currently receives water diverted from the Sacramento and American Rivers.

The "Other" Objective includes implementation of the Regional Water Efficiency Program (WEP) managed by RWA. Water conservation is a key element in implementing the Water Forum Agreement. The savings from improved water efficiency will help ensure additional water is available to directly benefit the local environment and subsequently benefit the Delta as it flows downstream. Three projects in the current Proposal implement water efficiency measures that will reduce current demand and subsequently provide benefits to the Delta.

IRWM Prioritization

Another way that the Delta benefits from the current ARB IRWM program is by the project prioritization process. The IRWM region assigns a priority to projects that meet certain criteria. Specifically, current priorities are given to projects that include the following criteria that can result in direct benefits to the Delta:

- Water supply reliability
- Conjunctive use
- Water recycling
- Water conservation
- Assist in achieving one or more goals of the CALFED Bay-Delta Program.
- Support and improve local and regional water supply reliability

These criteria account for more than 20% (6 out of 28) of the current criteria for prioritizing projects. As can be seen in this prioritization process, the ARB IRWM identifies and prioritizes projects that provide demonstrable benefit to the Delta.

Assuring Revisions to IRWM Plan Will Continue to Help Reduce Dependence on the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta

RWA is currently updating the ARB IRWM Plan, with a planned completion for late 2012. The updated IRWM Plan will, when implemented, continue to improve local supply reliability, water use efficiency, and increase the use of recycled water resulting in benefits to the Delta. The current objectives will remain intact, but will be improved by developing quantifiable goals and prioritizing projects based on their contribution towards meeting a regional goal. Water conservation legislation (SBX7_7), and metering requirements for 2013 (for CVP contractors) and 2025 (for non-CVP contractors) ensure that significant advances in water conservation will be a part of the updated plan.

Recent developments in the Delta suggest increased scrutiny of the impacts of not only Delta diversions, but also of uses of water within the Delta watershed. This is exemplified by the failed AB 2092 (2010), which sought to assign financial responsibility for upstream diversions, as well as by the SWRCB's Delta Flow Criteria, which proposed inflows to the Delta from the Sacramento River watershed. The updated ARB IRWM Plan will continue to promote the region's water supply self-sufficiency, while seeking opportunities to benefit the Delta and the rest of the state.